DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 101 286 CS 001 572

AUTHOR	Glover, Michael
TITLE	Quickie Tests for Reading: Fast, Simple Tests to Determine Reading Level.
INSTITUTION	New Mexico State Dept. of Education, Santa Fe. Div. of Instructional Services.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	74
NOTE	18p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Cloze Procedure; Elementary Education; Evaluation Methods; *Informal Reading Inventory; *Reading Diagnosis; Reading Instruction; Reading Level; *Reading Tests; Test Construction

ABSTRACT

The reading test forms in this booklet are to be used primarily for determining students' reading grade level. In expanded forms, they can also serve as diagnostic tools for some reading and learning disabilities. All teachers should be able to administer these tests with relative accuracy and, when applicable, discover narrow areas which will require more comprehensive testing by a specialist. The tests discussed are commercially prepared informal reading inventories, the cloze procedure, and a sight word test. Information on preparing and on using the tests is provided. (TO)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED101286

QUICKIE TESTS FOR READING

FAST, SIMPLE TESTS
to
DETERMINE READING LEVEL

PREPARED BY

MICHAEL GLOVER
Title IV Specialist

CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION UNIT
DIVISION OF
INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

Henry W. Pascual
Director

Jean Salas
Title IV Specialist

Miguel Encinias
Bilingual Specialist

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Leonard J. DeLayo
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Santa Fe, New Mexico

The work presented or reported in this booklet was financed with funds out of Title IV, Public Law 88-352 from the U.S. Office of Health, Education and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Health, Education and Welfare, and no official endorsement by Health, Education and Welfare should be inferred.

AS 001 572

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONTENTS

1. Background and Purpose of Testing

2. Materials - Commercial and Teacher-Made

3. How to Use the Tests

   A. INFORMAL READING INVENTORY

   B. CLOZE

   C. SIGHT WORD TEST

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTION

1.

There are several forms of reading tests. The ones in this booklet will serve primarily as a method for determing each student's reading grade level. In their expanded forms, they can also serve as diagnostic tools for certain reading and learning disabilities. Without specific training in learning disabilities or reading, however, most teachers should only hope to discover areas which will require more comprehensive testing by a specialist. Anyone can administer these tests with relative accuracy and, when problems do arise, aid the work of the specialist by narrowing the field of inquiry. The teacher may also be able to discover areas in which, by doing additional research, he may be able to help the child.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2.

Commercial Materials

Numerous forms of the Informal Reading Inventory are available from almost every educational press in the country. A quick check of catalogues, with libraries, or a reading specialist will provide a fairly comprehensive list. Two of the most widely used are the:

Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty

By Donald D. Durrell, Boston University
Copyright 1955 - Harcourt, Brace + World, Inc.
(This one is highly recommended.)

Gates - McKillop Reading Diagnostic Tests

By Arthur I. Gates and Anne S. McKillop, Columbia
Copyright 1962 - Teachers College Press

Teacher-Designed Tests

One of the biggest advantages of designing your own test is that the teacher will be able to provide materials acculturated to the individual students. This is the main drawback of the commercially available tests. Quite often these tests present concepts with which the students are completely unfamiliar and thus tend to confuse reading ability with general knowledge recall and conceptualization.

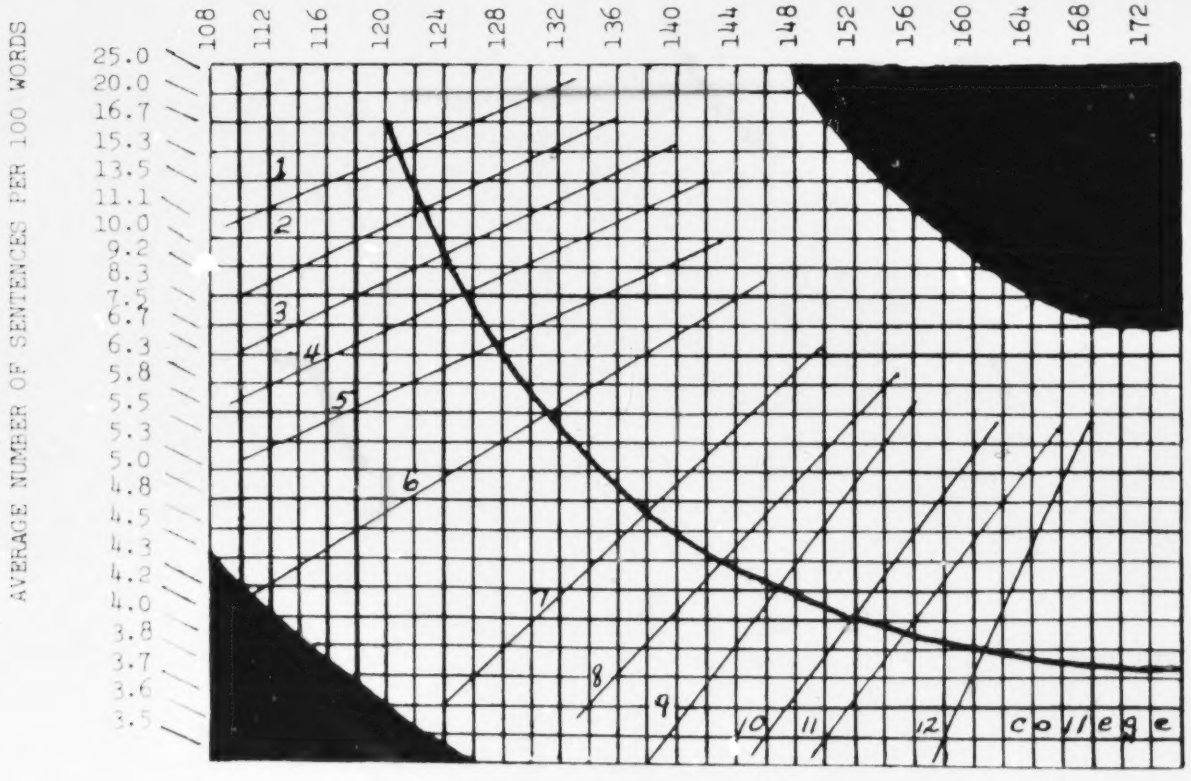
There are roughly three methods of developing an Informal Reading Inventory. The easiest way would be to pick a collection of graded readers. The second easiest would be to choose any reading material and determine its approximate grade level. The most difficult method would be writing your own selections for each grade level. Assuming a graded

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

reader series is chosen, all that remains is to choose passages of the appropriate length as shown in this table and write the comprehension questions.

Grade Level	Approx. No. of Words	Approx. No. of Sentences
1	15-25	4
2-3	40-60	6-8
4-5	75-100	6-8
6-8	100-150	6-8
9-12	200	6-8

In order to determine the reading level of materials that are ungraded, the following method is used. Choose three 100 word passages from different sections of the material. Count the number of sentences and the number of syllables in each passage. Average the three figures for sentences and the three for syllables. Using the Fry Graph for Estimating Readability (below), plot the two averages to receive a reasonably accurate idea forthe reading grade level of the materials.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Writing one's own test material is extremely difficult since it is almost impossible to determine the reading level with any reasonable degree of precision. The only acceptable method of doing this is to take a list of words generally considered to be part of the vocabulary for each grade level. This can be done by consulting basal reading books which generally contain a list of words the student learns at each level; spelling and vocabulary workbooks are also good sources if they are graded. Then stories need to be written relying primarily upon those words and which roughly fit the length chart above. The writer must be extremely careful not to include ideas, concepts, or other items with which the children may not be familiar or which might be confusing.

Care must always be taken when writing or selecting passages for use as an Informal Reading Inventory. One thing to keep in mind is that the passage must present a few items of information and should always be "terminal." By "terminal," we mean that even if a passage is lifted from the middle of a larger selection, it cannot require any antecedents or refer to elements in portions of the selection not being used.

The number of questions to be asked depends upon the size of the selection. A general rule of thumb is one question for each sentence. The questions should be entirely of a simple recall type for grades 1-3, and primarily of this type for the other grades. Depending upon teacher preferences, a few questions of the cognitive ("thinking") or imaginative type may be used from grade 4 up. These questions would call upon the student to add to the imagery of the passage or to put various elements of the story together in order to evaluate or pass judgement on what he has just read.

The Cloze Test is less accurate in determining the child's reading level, but is still quite useful for matching a student to a particular

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

book and giving the teacher a good idea of the student's general language ability. The Cloze Test should only be used for the third grade and up, its effectiveness below that level is questionable. This test is most valid for the sixth grade level and above.

The Cloze Test is quite simple to develop. First, choose a passage from any reading material so long as it is not very technical. Short stories and narrative passages are best. If the material is not graded, determine the reading grade level by the method outlined previously. The length of the passage should be somewhat longer than those used in the Informal Reading Inventory--roughly double, but not so long as to comprise more than five minutes of reading. Next, develop 5-10 recall questions, preferably multiple choice for each passage being used.

Finally, pick a number between 5 and 10 (7 and 8 seem to be the most common). Let's say 7. Delete every 7th word beginning with the second or third sentence of the selection. The opening statement must be untouched and explanatory enough that the passage is not completely nonsensical. Do not delete any words in the final sentence.

The Sight Word Test is the least adequate of the three. It will only test the student's ability to recognize the vocabulary found in his reading material. Again, either graded readers or material the teacher grades himself may be used. Many reading series include a vocabulary list of words found in the books at each level. If one of these lists is not available, simply pick out all nouns, verbs, and modifiers until a list of 200 words has been compiled and does not duplicate earlier lists. The first grade list should include nearly all articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. The process of developing a Sight Word Test is very tedious if one does not have a list to work from.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3.

The Informal Reading Inventory

At least three selections for each grade level must be developed for each time the test is administered to a particular student. The person administering the test must have one very clear, very legible (preferably large type) copy for the students' use and a copy for each student tested for the tester's use in marking and scoring. The tester should position himself so that his actions, while marking the IRI, do not distract the student. Always keep track of the time it takes the student to read the passage. Approximate reading speeds are:

Grade Level	Words Per Minute
1	35-40
2	60-70
3	90-110
4 and above	120-140

(These are not norms or standards, simply an idea of adequacy.)

The actual reading speed is unimportant, but if the student is reading far below the approximate average it may be because he is having difficulty. (For example: if a 6th grade student is timed at 90-100 words per minute, it is not cause for alarm. If, however, he is reading at a speed of 60-70 wpm, the teacher should test further for other problems that student may be having. The comprehension questions for each selection are always given orally.

At each grade level, the student will have three selections--one for oral reading, one for silent reading, and one to be read to him for

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

checking listening comprehension. Choose a level for the student's first attempt well below what is believed to be his reading level. On the silent reading, the tester should be in a position to watch the student's eye movement and whether or not he moves his lips. If his eye movement is jerky or he goes back again and again, he probably needs work to expand his eye span. This will also be evident if, in the oral reading, the student uses word-by-word phrasing.

When marking the oral reading, the following marks are used:

around omitted words, parts of words, or punctuation.

above each word or phrase repeated by the student.

above each word on which the student hesitates (1 or 2 seconds).

above each word pronounced for the student (after a 5 second hesitation).

to indicate insertion of a word, part of a word, or a phrase. The insertion should be written in.

Mispronunciations are written above the word mispronounced.

underneath each error which the student corrects by himself. Corrections are not considered repetitions.

To score the results of the test, count the number of uncorrected errors made by the student in his oral reading, then determine the percent of error. (For example: if the selection is 100 words and the student makes 12 uncorrected errors, his percent of error is 12 percent. Divide the total number of uncorrected errors by the total number of words.) The student's percent of error should be 20 or less. If it is more than

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

20, it can be considered that the student is beyond his reading level. The student should also score at least 80% on comprehension.

Additional factors need to be considered here. If a student has a very good reading ability (5% of error or less) but poor comprehension (40% or less) the student does not need work on basic reading skills but on comprehension skills. If, on the other hand, the student has a poor reading ability (30% of error or more) but adequate comprehension (80% or better), the student will probably need to concentrate on phonics and word recognition.

Another thing to remember is that a student should never be given the same selection twice. If the student has already been exposed to a particular selection, even if it was several months before, he will be at least vaguely familiar with it and the validity of that test will be seriously impaired. Each time the IRI is administered, new materials must be used.

The Informal Reading Inventory can serve as a tool for 1) student placement (pre-testing), 2) on-going analysis, and 3) post-testing. If it is to be used for any of these purposes, it should be used for all of them since other types of informal tests (the Cloze and Sight Word) do not correlate well to the IRI. The other tests only serve well as pre-tests in matching students to materials.

The teacher using the IRI must not test simply for one specific grade level, but should test a fairly wide range. A sixth grade teacher, for example, should have tests available from at least third grade level to ninth grade level.

The Cloze Test

All the administrator of this test needs is a key for checking the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

answers to the deletion fill-ins and the comprehension questions. The students may take this test as a group.

The student does not need to fill in precisely the same word that was deleted, but a close synonym is desirable. Rarely, but occasionally, a student will score practically zero on the Cloze Test by putting in words which are totally unrelated to the originals, but which fit well and make sense in context. The test scorer should always check for this on extremely low scores. The student should have in the neighborhood of 50% accuracy filling in the deletions and 80% accuracy on the comprehension questions. A battery of tests covering several grade levels should be administered at one time, but since the Cloze Test takes much longer than the IRI, perhaps students should only be tested at 3 or 4 levels rather than 6 as with the IRI.

Basic Sight Word Test

The Sight Word Test must be administered individually like the IRI. The student is given the list of 200 words and asked to pronounce each of them. The administrator then checks each word the student pronounces correctly. The student should score at least 70% accuracy before being allowed to use the book from which the words were taken.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE CLOZE PROCEDURE

As An Informal Reading Inventory

The name Cloze derives from the Gestalt theory of closure--the human tendency of an individual to see incomplete structures in terms of complete patterns.

To make the closure, the reader must have a grasp of language structures on the page and an understanding of substance and tone of the passage he is reading.

Wilson Taylor defines "cloze unit" as "any single occurrence of a successful attempt to reproduce accurately a part deleted from a message (any language product) be deciding, from the context that remains, what the missing part should be."

If both members of the communication act share common associations and common constructive tendencies, they should be able to anticipate each other's verbalizations. Thus, the cloze procedure is an objective measur of the langauge correspondence between reader and writer.

Cloze as a readability tool (to replace known readability formulas) assumes:

1. that the more readable a piece of writing is, the better understood it will be even if some words are left out;

2. the better the writing is understood, the more likely a reader can guess what words are missing.

In order to use the cloze as a readability index, choose samples of equal length to be compared and delete the same number of words from each (at random or every nth word--usually 5th). Use a standard size blank (10 type spaces); administer all mutilated passages to all subjects in the test group. The passage's score is the total of scores all subjects make on it. The passage with the highest score is the most readable passage.

It is felt by researchists that the cloze procedure takes into account what other formulas do not:

meaning;
the sequential nature of language expression;
the maturity levels of particular subjects or groups.

For contrasting relative difficulties of different materials, only the "any" word method of deletion seems justifiable. By "any" word method, we mean deleting every nth (5th, 7th, 10th) word, regardless of its function in the sentence. To restrict deletions to particular kinds of words is to ignore the fact that these kinds may not occur equally often in different materials, and the difference in frequency is probably, in itself, a readability factor.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Bormuth's research, 1966, found that, regardless of person's reading ability, the same features of language that caused difficulty for him caused the same amount of difficulty for others.

If the average cloze percentage for several cloze tests based upon samples from a book falls below some agreed upon criterion (e.g. 41% cloze score as suggested by Earl F. Rankin), the book may be considered too difficult for that class of students.

41-46% (average) = 75-80% comp
57-65% (average) = 90-95% comp
-41 = too difficult

Cloze as comprehension test:

1. The procedure can be used to construct test for the purpose of measuring either general reading comprehension as measured by standardized reading tests or the specific comprehension of a particular article; however, the cloze tends to measure specific comprehension of an article better than general comprehension.

2. The procedure may be used to measure the comprehension of facts versus relationships. Deleting every nth word should sample all clues to structural meaning (or comprehension of inter-relationships); deleting only nouns and verbs should measure, primarily, comprehension of substantive content or relatively independent ideas (lexical comprehension).

   The "any" word deletion seems to be a fair measure of intelligence. The inference is that I.Q. is more closely related to structural comprehension than to lexical comprehension.

3. The cloze procedure may also measure comprehension as product versus process. The usual method of measuring reading comprehension is to measure the end product of the reading process by asking questions concerning the material after the reader has completed his reading. The cloze test may be used to measure comprehension as <u>product</u> by administering it (the cloze) based on a total passage (or portion of it) immediately after the reader has completed the passage. Apparently, cloze tests are valid measures of comprehension when comprehension is defined as post-reading comprehension.

4. The cloze can be used to measure reading comprehension as an ongoing process. If two people make the same score on a test administered before reading an article and one person knew more about the subject to begin with, the amount of learning is quite unequal. If one wishes to measure the amount learned, one must give one close test before and one after the subjects have read the article. However, unless the effects of regression upon gain scores is measured, the gain score may be the largest for those students with the lowest initial scores.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(One study using the interview technique attempted to elicit responses as to why students inserted various words as they did. High-scoring students demonstrated significantly greater superiority in such characteristics as recognizing syntactical clues, sensitivity to style, recognition of implied meanings, and verbal flexibility etc.)

Utility of the Cloze:

1. Ease of construction: Objective multiple-choice type questions require time, skill, and training if they are to be constructed suitably reliable. Different cloze tests can be easily constructed in quantity by clerical personnel.

2. Ease of scoring: Hand scoring keys may be very easily made, especially for exact-word responses; these are strictly objective, then, and are probably more valid. (N.B. Two studies, 1 by Rankin and 1 by Taylor, found that reliability and validity were <u>not</u> improved by synonym scoring.)

3. The cloze is useful in constructing equivalent test forms drawn from the same or similar materials, whereas it is most difficult to construct equivalent test forms of the multiple-choice type.

4. From the standpoint of the classroom teacher, she could use the cloze readily to determine the readability of a textbook <u>relative</u> to the type of students in a given class;

   a. both general comprehension skills and specific comprehension skills relative to particular subject matter materials could be determined and

   b. discrepancies between these two types of comprehension might provide suggestions for individualizing teaching techniques.

5. Use of the pre-reading test as a test of information about a given subject could be used to assess the readiness for the class as a whole.

6. Cloze exercises might be of value in improving the use of context clues or vocabulary.

7. An efficient reading process may be induced in students; and with an understanding of what kinds of words bear the burden of communication in written material, the attention of the problem-reader may be focused on the words of those classes. This focus may be easily taught through the deletion of nouns, verbs, modifiers, etc., the latter being especially meaningful in discussion of style (in literature or English classes).

8. The use of cloze exercises, it is thought, forces the student to <u>think</u> in the language: English or whatever.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Not all the problems of the use of the cloze technique have been ironed out. For instance, the influence of personality factors upon test performance has not been subjected to analysis. Cloze test results may be peculiarly susceptible to influence by extraneous personality factors; i.e. individuals with above-average anxiety. However, personality influence on test results of all types of tests is continuously being studied.

Applicability to different types of materials and at various age levels is still under investigation. For example, my own thesis attempted to use the cloze to determine whether or not figures of speech in literature was a specific readability factor; the question, to my way of thinking, of whether or not the readability formulas can measure figurative language and whether figures make reading tasks more difficult is still not answered.

The size of the word deletion sample necessary to measure the readability or the comprehension of a total article has not been determined. Bormuth, in 1965, indicates that as long as four or more words of continuous text appear on either side of an item deleted, the item's difficulty is unaffected by the deletion or non-deletion of key or other words in the text. Since every-nth word deletion patterns coincide with no known patterns of language, it is reasonable to assume that the cloze deletion procedure results in item sampling that is essentially random.

Many suggestions have been given as to which word or which numbered word to delete: the 5th word? the 10th word? every nth word selected by choosing a word from 1-10 as the 1st word to delete and then settling on the number for subsequent deletions. Research has been conducted on eliminating nouns only; nouns and specific types of verbs; the last word in the sentence; modifiers; prepositions and conjunctions (excepting co-ordinating conjunction). It should be evident that (and research by Louthan indicates that) noun deletions, specific verb deletions, and modifier deletions--when these are the only kinds of words deleted--result in the greatest loss of comprehension and are, therefore, assumed to be the basic meaning carrier of written material. If one word in ten is deleted and all words are of one of these classes, there is a marked loss in comprehension.

How to make and score a Cloze test:

1. Choose selection from a graded basal reader (or preferably from several graded basal readers);

2. Delete every 5-10th word (I think every 5th is too many but am not sure about every tenth; therefore, I use every 7th);

3. Make a scoring key or place the correct word, numbered, to correspond with the blanks, in the left margin so that the margin may be folded under and the students can correct their own sheets. (I prefer a key because I feel that numbering the words and, of necessity, the blanks, may be distracting to the persons taking the test.);

4. Leave a complete sentence at the beginning and at the end of each cloze test or exercise.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

5. Instruct students to pre-read the entire selection; then return to the beginning and fill in the blanks, attempting to match the word exactly and to fill in all spaces;

6. 41-46% average score on the Cloze = 75-80% comprehension on multiple choice (percent right versus percent wrong).

   57-65% average score on the Cloze = 90-95% comprehension on multiple choice.

CLOZE TEST

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A MEMBER OF THE CREW

As Jimmy stood at attention on the deck of the new guppy submarine with the rest of the crew, he felt both pride and a strange unhappiness. Sub school had been _____, but always before him _____ the dream: the intense _____ said to be aboard _____. Now he had finally _____ it. Here, on the _____, was a tightly knit _____ of friends who worked _____ together on a dangerous _____.

Something had gone wrong _____. Don't they like me" _____ wondered as he stared _____ the long dock. Is _____ it?

Everything else matched _____ dream. The steel skin _____ lifted and rolled with _____ swell of green-black water. _____ fishlike length of steel _____ at the dock. Jimmy _____ a keen sense of _____, but at the same _____ a strange sense of _____ belonging.

Where was the _____ bond of friendship that _____ were so famous for? _____ the best men could _____ in. Jimmy remembered the _____ he had been given _____ his head whirled. He _____ come through every one_____ flying colors, but what _____ was it if the _____ didn't like him? He _____ now, in a mixture _____ pride and fear, as _____ Philip spoke to the _____ group.

"This is a _____ sub," said Commander Philips." _____ going to give it _____ shakedown cruise. As you _____, a sub isn't like _____ ships. Anything that goes _____ can be very dangerous. _____ new sub has been _____ and retested, of course, _____ not on a real _____ run. So it can _____ a tricky business, this _____ cruise."

Commander Philips ran his _____ keenly over the members _____ his crew. "You know," he continued "the dangers you have to face.